

before I came to Congress, I was a judge for 22 years in Texas, and before that I was a prosecutor.

Many years ago, when I prosecuted cases, I prosecuted an individual who raped a 9-year-old. When her mother testified on the witness stand, she would not refer to the crime as rape or as sexual assault. She referred to that crime as a fate worse than death. And when she explained to the jury what that meant, she was saying that being sexually assaulted as a child is a fate worse than death. Hopefully our Supreme Court will not require a child victim to be murdered before the Supreme Court will allow the death penalty for the perpetrator, because it is, as this lady has testified many years ago, a fate worse than death. When a person commits a crime of sexual assault, they try to steal the soul of a victim.

So, Madam Speaker, I support a State's right to decide for itself whether or not a child rapist should be executed or not, because children are more important than rapists.

And that's just the way it is.

#### BEGIN IMPEACHMENT HEARINGS ON RESOLUTION OF IMPEACHMENT OF VICE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, on November 7, 2007, this House voted to refer Congressman KUCINICH's resolution of impeachment of Vice President CHENEY to the House Judiciary Committee. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I now ask that we immediately begin impeachment hearings.

The issues at hand are far too serious to ignore. DICK CHENEY faces credible allegations of abuse of power that if proven may well constitute high crimes and misdemeanors.

Did the Vice President manipulate intelligence to push this Nation into war based on false pretense?

Did the Vice President unmask a covert CIA agent for political purposes?

Did the Vice President order the illegal surveillance of Americans and the illegal use of torture?

These questions must be answered.

Just recently, former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan revealed that the Vice President and his staff purposely gave him false information to report to the American people, a clear obstruction of justice.

This administration has undermined the checks and balances of our government by brazenly ignoring congressional subpoenas and recklessly claiming executive privilege. Impeachment hearings are the only way to force the Bush administration to answer questions and tell the truth.

Congress must take the first step by enforcing the subpoenas against Harriet Miers and the President's Chief of Staff and hold them in contempt of

Congress. In this time, at this moment, Congress must stand for the truth. If we fail to act, history may well judge us complicit in the alleged crimes of Vice President CHENEY.

Madam Speaker, a growing chorus of Americans are calling for accountability. The response from Congress thus far has been silence and denial.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida is reminded to refrain from personal references toward the Vice President.

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, not long ago I launched a Web site in support of my call for hearings. The people responded en masse. After only 4 weeks, over 189,000 Americans have registered their support for hearings, names I now hold in my hand. These frustrated and patriotic Americans come from all 50 States and share one common goal: accountability for the Bush-Cheney administration and a rebirth of Congress as an equal branch of government.

So many have been working on this cause before me. Groups like Democrats.com, AfterDowningStreet.org, CodePink, ImpeachBush.org, Impeach for Peace and others. All told, there have been well over 1 million signatures urging us to take action.

Tomorrow, I will deliver these names to my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee with a letter to my friend Chairman CONYERS calling for hearings. I will ask my colleagues to sign this letter. In addition, tomorrow, and continuing every day for months, I will publish in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD several thousand names of supporters who have signed up.

History demands that we take action, because the case against Vice President CHENEY is far stronger than the illegalities surrounding Watergate. When compared to the partisan and petty allegations made against President Clinton by Ken Starr and the GOP Congress, the true gravity of the case against the Vice President appears in its devastating clarity. In fact, in the history of our Nation, we have never encountered a moment where the actions of a President or a Vice President have more strongly demanded the use of the power of impeachment.

I have heard the arguments that it is too late, that we have run out of time, and that we don't have the votes. While today there may not be enough votes to impeach, it is premature to think that such support would not exist after hearings. Let us remember that it wasn't until after hearings began that the Watergate tapes emerged. Who knows what facts will comfort when the full truth is told in this case?

Arguing that it is too late signals to future administrations that in the waning months in office they are immune from constitutional accountability. Hold hearings which will put the evidence on the table, and the evidence alone must determine the outcome.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Visitors in the gallery are guests of the House and shall refrain from displays of approval or disapproval.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LEWIS of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### COMMEMORATING THE 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, today marks the 79th anniversary of the birth of history's greatest champion of peace, Dr. King, who became the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize when he received that great honor at age 35.

At the King Center in Atlanta, visitors are asked to take a pledge that includes the words: "I pledge to do everything I can to make America and the world a place where equality and justice, freedom and peace will grow and flourish."

Today, Madam Speaker, America needs to hear Dr. King's message of peace more than ever before, because our Nation's leaders continue to take reckless actions to put the world on the road to ever-widening conflicts. We have seen many new examples of war-mongering in just the past few days and weeks. Twelve days ago, a leading Republican candidate for President said it would be fine for him if the American occupation of Iraq continued for another 100 years. Think about that. He would ask babies born 80 years from now to go to Baghdad for a commitment that the American people want to end right now.

Now, President Bush continues his saber-rattling over Iran. Days ago, he warned that the world must take action against that country before it is too late. Isn't this a clear signal that the administration is still considering an attack against Iran, even though we know that it is not developing nuclear weapons that can threaten the United States?

Therefore, as a lesson to be learned, we don't know all the facts about the